

# Address of Thanks



*Kharam Molbog, MD  
(Batch 2024 Valedictorian)*

Rev. Fr. Jannel N. Abogado, OP; Dean Maria Lourdes D. Maglinao; Regent Fr. Angel Aparicio, OP; Asst. Dean Remedios Dee-Chan, Faculty Secretary Dexter Clifton Pe; Clinical Programs Officer Citadel De Castro; department heads, esteemed faculty members, support staff, parents, dear guests and my beloved Batch 2024, good morning.

For those of you who don't know me, please allow me to give a very brief introduction of myself and tell you a little bit of my backstory, so that I may appear to you as an actual person and not just someone you are all forced to listen to for the next 10-15 minutes. Hopefully, it will not be too boring for all of you.

I am Kharam Baricava Molbog. Today, I stand before you not just as a representative of academic excellence but, more importantly, as a story of small beginnings.

I come from the small town of Solano in the province of Nueva Vizcaya where I was born and grew up. I do not come from a family of doctors, nor do I come from a rich family. I was also not a very stellar kid growing up. I had no special abilities or talents. I never had a photographic memory. I am not even into any sports. I am just an ordinary person.

People have always referred to me as a "late bloomer", because back in elementary and high school, I wasn't really part of the top-performing students in class, just a little bit above average. I did not graduate as the valedictorian of my class, not even as the salutatorian, or as top 3 or 4; I cannot even remember what my rank was and I did not even pass the UPCAT.

After my first semester in college, I was fortunate enough to have been included in the Dean's list, but if I remember correctly, I was rank number 100. In the next semester, after some tweaks in my study habits, I was ranked 7th, and in the next, 2nd. Eventually,

in my third year of college, I was finally number 1. It was a very slow, meticulous and arduous work, but progress, no matter the pace, is still progress.

Because of this progress, I was hopeful that I would graduate summa cum laude. Unfortunately, I fell short. Shortly after that, I was diagnosed with extrapulmonary tuberculosis; hence the scrofula scars on my neck. At that point, it was the greatest challenge that I had to face. It forced me to take a gap year and also made me unable to study for and take the MedTech board exam. I felt defeated.

After a year of rest and recovery, I then entered med school, which was when things kind of started falling into place. Something that kept haunting me though, was the unfinished business I had with the MedTech board exam. Despite all the setbacks and the crippling fear of failure, I took the risk and by God's grace was able to be the Top 1 examinee for that batch.

Because of this I realized that things are not always going to be ideal, and most of the time, things will not always go according to plan, because that's just how it is. But this does not make us any less likely to reach our goals. We are all crippled by something, whether by fear, anxiety, or other factors beyond our control, but by no means are we crippled beyond repair.

More recently, during one of my rotations in clerkship, I was involved in a motor vehicular accident. I was riding a tricycle on the way to duty, not because I was running late or anything, and it collided with another vehicle, which caused my head to hit the metal frame in front. Because of this I sustained a 7-cm laceration on the middle of my forehead. I was GCS 15 all throughout of course but it still hurt and bled a lot, which was why I had to undergo emergency suturing at the OR. Because of this unfortunate accident, I was afraid that I would

become a little dull and stupid afterwards. Thankfully, to my great relief, and for sure to the great relief of everyone, my brain cells managed to remain intact and I was still able to prepare adequately and do really well in both my written and oral revalidas.

Throughout the years, I have been defeated more times than I can count, and this includes not only the big and sensational defeats, but also the small defeats with the battles I face every day. If there is anything I have learned from all of these things, it is that indeed, the purpose of life is to be defeated by greater and greater things. On this same day 5 years ago, I failed to reach a grade high enough to be summa cum laude, but here I am today. Each failure, each setback is an opportunity for improvement. The road to this podium was not easy, but it has been a long time coming.

But enough about me, because certainly, I am not the only one capable of overcoming life's challenges. My batchmates and myself, known as the pioneer batch, or the pandemic batch, were the first years when the pandemic struck. After years of getting accustomed to a face-to-face setup, we were suddenly plunged into the world of online classes. I am sure I was not the only one who experienced the difficulty of beginning our journey in med school on top of having to stare at the screen all day, being isolated and weighed down by the number of deaths and people hospitalized around us, sometimes even those closest to us. A lot of us have lost people to the pandemic, and we carry with us their hopes and dreams as we fulfill ours.

During that time, although I was glad that I got to wake up 1 minute before my online classes started, I would never want to go back to that setup ever again. All the recorded lectures that sometimes we had to watch at 2x speed, Zoom-proctored exams, sometimes with two cameras; the anxiety when taking exams because anytime you can get disconnected; answering STBIs instead of dissecting actual cadavers; but I believe all of us made the best out of what we were given.

Though those times were extremely stressful, they were punctuated by moments that showed our collective strength as a batch as well as our strength as individuals, like the study sessions at Discord with our online friends, the initiative by some of our batchmates to start peer review sessions and the call of our leaders to have academic breaks whenever things get a little too overwhelming.

I would always remember fondly all the times my attention span lasted only 5 minutes and my only contribution to the discussion was the "Thank you po Doc" at the end of the Zoom meeting. The times when we had to say "Doc can you please repeat your question, choppy po kayo", but really our minds were just floating. "Sorry po doc hehe." I would also never forget my script whenever I fail to answer a question in one of the SGDs, "Sorry po Doc, I will read on it po."

But you see, this may be an unpopular opinion, but personally the hardest part about med school is not the overwhelming amount of material we had to read or the exams or SGDs. I am saddened by all the friendships I could not nurture and all the invites I could not go to because I was too wrapped up with my never-ending to-do-lists. I am saddened by all the family gatherings I had to miss, all the times I could not spare to play with my brother. When I started med school, he was but a little baby boy and now he's all grown up and going into high school.

Time really did fly by so fast that I wish I took things more slowly and paid more attention, that I should have played cards with my parents more or spent more movie nights with them or gone to more outings, that I should have played more PlayStation with my brother. Simply put, if there's anything I could change, it is that I should have spent more time with my family before they migrated to Canada, because by then I would be alone.

Truly, excellence comes at a price.

At this point, I would like to give my thanks to everyone who has supported me in one way or another and without whom I would not have made it this far.

First and foremost, to Almighty God, for always listening to my prayers. People would often say na "favorite ako ni Lord", and to be honest it also baffles me how I have been receiving so much even though I think I don't fully deserve everything I have received. So, thank you, Lord. Thank you, always, for all the answered prayers.

To the most hardworking people I know, my mama and papa. Thank you so much for everything. You have given me so much and I cannot thank you enough for all the sacrifices you have made for me. You see, I have once read in the *Some Days* book that the key to raising a valedictorian is to never pressure your kids to study. Indeed, I studied hard and pursued excellence not because I was told to,

but because I saw how hard my parents worked, and that anything I achieve is a token of gratitude to them. Everybody, please join me in giving a warm round of applause for my parents. P.S., I'm sorry for being expensive, but please still give me allowance until residency.

To Khyron, my little brother who is actually not so little anymore. I am sorry for all the times I could not play with you because I was busy studying, but I would like you to know that Kuya loves you and that I am thankful for everything you do for me, like waking me up from my naps or getting me water or bringing my used plates to the sink.

To my lolo in heaven who I was very close with and who passed away from lung cancer when I was a kid, thank you for inspiring me to become a doctor. He used to always say that he wants me to always be the number 1 student in class. Isa lang naman akong masunuring apo.

To all my other family members in Solano, Marinduque, Canada, especially to my mommy Zita, mama Mimi, tita Len, tita Jen, tito Ogs, tita Carmi, tita Rhoda, who have all helped me throughout the years and gone through great lengths to witness this moment today. I am sorry I cannot mention everyone, but I am thankful for all of you for being the best supporters and prayer warriors.

To my friends, I cannot mention you all one by one because I know everyone wants me to stop talking already. Thank you to my C3 and C4 subsecmates, my friends from japchae, JMT, all my chismis group chats, Japan friends and all the new friends I have made along the way. You have made my med school journey more bearable. Thank you so much, and please do not be strangers after this.

And to all my supporters, in general, thank you. With you, I have found that it is easier to

succeed when everyone around you wants you to succeed.

Next, I am only here today because I stand on the shoulders of giants. Thank you to my professors, because you have always pushed me beyond my limits and taught me that there are no limits to what you can accomplish, except the limits you place on yourself.

I would also like to thank my home in the last 9 years, the University of Santo Tomas. Thank you for giving me room to grow, for all the opportunities you have given me and for nurturing my potential.

And to Bea, my girlfriend, best friend and home: thank you. You have been my unwavering support, my source of strength and the reason behind every success. Thank you for always having my back, for listening to all my rants and for always knowing what to do, thank God. In fact, my motto in life is BKB, or "Bea knows best." Please know that there is no way that I could have done this without you.

With all that said, I would like to end my speech with a motto that I believe applies not only to me but to everyone here: SIC PARVIS MAGNA, which means greatness from small beginnings. No dream is too big, no effort is too small, and no sacrifice will be in vain. Whatever is meant for you will always find its way to you.

We all have a chance at greatness. Just because I am here does not mean that I will be the best doctor. It just means that I was the best at answering questions. Each one of you can be the best, and I look forward to seeing you forge your own paths to greatness as graduates of the biggest, brightest and best medical school.

Here's to the future doctors, healers and leaders of tomorrow.

Congratulations to the class of 2024 and Godspeed. Thank you very much.